DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 969 CS 511 143

TITLE	Improving Student Writing through Effective Classroom Practices. National Writing Project. In Brief. Spring 2002.
INSTITUTION	National Writing Project, Berkeley, CA.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-04-00
NOTE	5p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Writing Project, University of California, 2105 Bancroft, #1042, Berkeley, CA 94720-1042. Tel: 510-642-0963; Fax: 510-642-4545; e-mail: nwp@writingproject.org; Web site: http://writingproject.org.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Classroom Techniques; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; *Instructional Effectiveness; Teacher Role; Teacher Surveys; *Writing Assignments; *Writing Improvement; *Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS	*National Writing Project

ABSTRACT

To succeed in today's information-driven economy, young people need to know how to write and communicate effectively. Writing is important for both academic and workplace success. Most National Writing Project (NWP) teachers who were surveyed in May 2001 stated that the NWP helped them become more up-to-date on the latest research, more familiar with strategies to teach diverse students, and more knowledgeable about helping students reach standards. This report provides some survey results of what teachers learned from NWP professional development: concrete teaching strategies--95%; up-to-date research and practice--93%; ways to assess student work and plan teaching--88%; ability to teach more diverse students--86%; and ability to help students meet standards--85%. The brief discusses some of these survey results in detail. (NKA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 465 969

NWP

NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

In Brief

Spring/2002

Improving Student Writing Through Effective Classroom Practices

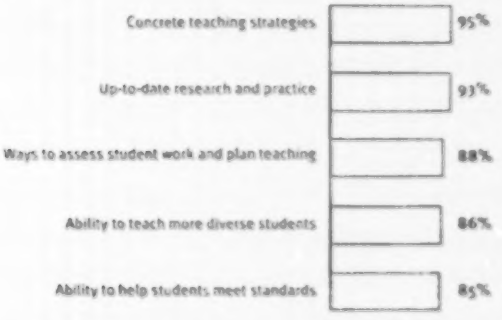
To succeed in today's information-driven economy, young people need to know how to write and communicate effectively. Writing is important for both academic and workplace success. It is essential to learning and thinking.

The National Writing Project (NWP) works with teachers across the country to improve the teaching of writing in the nation's classrooms. Results from two new research studies, one from the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and the other from Inverness Research Associates (IRA), show how NWP professional development leads to improved student writing achievement.

NWP teachers learn effective teaching strategies

Most NWP teachers surveyed by IRA in May 2001 stated that the writing project helped them become more up-to-date on the latest research, more familiar with strategies to teach diverse students, and more knowledgeable about helping students reach standards.

WHAT TEACHERS GAINED FROM NWP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Percentages represent teachers who marked 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 1 = "disagree strongly" and 5 = "agree strongly." (IRA, 2001)

"A lot of strategies from the writing project are now almost standard in our school."

– Fourth Grade Writing Project Teacher

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. A. Smith

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

The National Writing Project is a professional development network of 175 local sites in 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, annually serving about 100,000 kindergarten through university teachers in all disciplines.

CS 511 143

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NWP teachers design assignments using effective approaches

"I use writing throughout the day—it is part of almost everything. The children write to explain and write to integrate what they've learned in different areas....When I plan what to do [in any subject], I always plan a writing component."

– Fourth Grade
Writing Project Teacher

☐ Of 58 writing project teacher assignments analyzed by AED, 86% asked students to construct knowledge by analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, or interpreting information, rather than simply reproducing it. And of 763 pieces of student work produced in response to those assignments, 84% showed evidence of construction of knowledge. Ninety percent of teacher assignments analyzed by AED also asked students to demonstrate an understanding of concepts beyond a superficial awareness.

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT – GRADE 4

We were working on the story, Charlotte's Web. Students were asked to put themselves in the shoes of the author and attempt to produce a new final chapter with a clear story line and substantial detail to support characters, setting, problem, and conclusion. Students were asked to use dialogue and quotation marks.

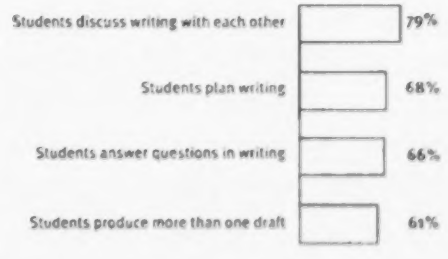
This fourth grade assignment asks students to demonstrate an understanding of concepts by rewriting an ending to *Charlotte's Web*. Students must show comprehension of both the story line and character development. (AED, 2001)

☐ The 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing assessment found that students who planned their writing, completed more than one draft, and kept portfolios of their work were more likely to score higher than their peers. NWP professional development fosters these and other related practices in the classroom.

"I've had many colleagues throughout the years who participated in NWP. We're all on the same page....By that, I mean that we see every child as capable of doing almost anything. We are an optimistic group—anything is possible."

– Third Grade
Writing Project Teacher

CLASSROOM PRACTICES THAT INCREASE AFTER TEACHERS ATTEND WRITING PROJECT SUMMER INSTITUTES

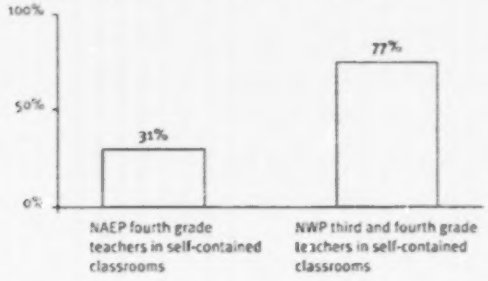


The percentages above represent teachers who indicated that they engaged in the practice "more often" after attending a writing project summer institute. (IRA, 2001)

NWP teachers spend more time on writing instruction

- National assessments of writing over the past two decades have repeatedly shown that students spend too little time writing in and out of school to reach high levels of writing achievement.* AED research shows that writing project teachers were far more likely to devote time to writing instruction than fourth grade teachers participating in NAEP's 1998 national sample.

TEACHERS WHO SPEND MORE THAN 90 MINUTES ON WRITING INSTRUCTION IN ONE WEEK



(AED, 2002)

NWP teachers help students improve their writing performance

- Third and fourth grade students of writing project teachers studied by AED showed significant improvement in writing achievement over the course of the 2000-2001 school year. In response to timed writing assignments, 89% of third-graders and 81% of fourth-graders reached adequate or strong achievement for effectiveness in persuasive writing on their follow-up assessment in spring 2001.

- A total of 83% of third-graders and 73% of fourth-graders demonstrated general or strong control of usage, mechanics, and spelling on their follow-up AED assessment.

- Of more than 2,700 writing project teachers surveyed by IRA in 2000, 95% said their experiences with the writing project would translate into improved writing skills for their students.

STUDENT WRITING SAMPLE – GRADE 4

Dear _____,

Do you like to read? Well if you do, I know the best person to invite to the class: J.K. Rowling! J.K. Rowling is the famous author who wrote all the Harry Potter books, and I think she'd be great to come to the class and talk about her writing.

If she came, she could explain to the class on how to make your stories thrilling, almost like you're really there. Next, she could even teach the class how to write good fantasy stories like she did with Harry Potter. After that, she could tell about her life as a child, as Lindsay's Grandmother did. We can even hear how she prefers to read her books. Finally, the class could ask her questions such as, "How did you get the idea for Harry Potter?"

Please, Mr. _____, invite J.K. Rowling to the class because she's my hero and I want to become an author someday. Plus, the class would learn a lot about writing stories, and you could even learn something from her, too.

Your best student, _____

Produced in response to a timed writing prompt, this fourth-grader's work demonstrates strong achievement in persuasive writing. The student's paper is well organized, has a strong sense of audience, and presents a clear, convincing argument. (AED, 2002)

* Applebee, Arthur N. "Alternative Models of Writing Development," CELA research article. Albany, NY: National Center on English Learning and Achievement (2001).

ABOUT THE EVALUATIONS

The Academy for Educational Development—
National Writing Project Evaluation

AED's three-year evaluation of the National Writing Project began in 1999. AED collected data from the classrooms of 35 third and fourth grade writing project teachers in five states: California, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania. A total of 763 pieces of student work were analyzed. In three-fourths of the schools studied, more than 50% of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

The AED study included two components. To assess teacher practices, assignments, and corresponding student work, participating teachers submitted two assignments that they felt prompted students to learn a subject or skill at their highest level. Teachers also submitted final drafts of all student work produced in response to those assignments.

AED scored teacher assignments on the extent to which they asked students to construct knowledge, demonstrate understanding of concepts, and connect the topic to their own lives. Corresponding student work was scored for organization and coherence, construction of knowledge, and usage, mechanics, and spelling. AED also administered a questionnaire about teacher assignments and classroom practices, and conducted telephone interviews with all participating teachers.

To assess student writing achievement over the course of one school year, timed persuasive writing prompts were administered in the fall and spring in all 35 classrooms. Student responses were scored on a six-point scale for effectiveness in persuasive writing and a four-point scale for the English conventions of usage, mechanics, and spelling.

For more information on methodology and results, please see Cheri Fancsali, Kari Nelsestuen, and Alexandra Weinbaum's *National Writing Project Evaluation* (New York: Academy for Educational Development, 2002).

Inverness Research Associates—
The National Writing Project: Client Satisfaction and Program Impact

IRA distributed a participant satisfaction survey to all teachers in writing project invitational institutes in summer 2000. A total of 2,731 teachers representing 154 sites completed the survey. Twenty-two percent responded to a May 2001 online follow-up survey designed to further evaluate the impact of writing project programming.

For more information on methodology and results, please see Mark St. John, Kathleen Dickey, Judy Hirabayashi, and Laura Stokes's *The National Writing Project: Client Satisfaction and Program Impact* (Inverness, California: Inverness Research Associates, 2001).

To learn more about how the National Writing Project brings schools and universities together to improve student writing achievement, visit the NWP website at:

www.writingproject.org

Support for the National Writing Project is provided by the U.S. Department of Education, foundations, corporations, universities, and K-12 schools.

National Writing Project
University of California
2105 Bancroft Way #1042
Berkeley, CA 94720-1042
Phone: 510-642-0963
Fax: 510-642-4545
Email: nwp@writingproject.org

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

☑ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☐ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").